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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002710

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SUBJECT: NDLEA EXHIBITS GREATER DRUG ENFORCEMENT PROWESS

REF: ABUJA 2665

1. Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter for reasons 1.5(b) and (d).

2.(C) Summary: In two recent meetings with the Ambassador, NDLEA Chairman Bello Lafiaji extolled the drug enforcement agency's more energetic efforts. Drug seizures made thus far already surpass last year's totals and the NDLEA stands to receive increased resources - both from the Federal government and INL - to further fuel the Nigerian war on drugs. The NDLEA is also eager to improve its role in fighting money laundering, but is learning its limits in attempting to take on crimes beyond the realm of narcotics. End Summary.

3.(U) Ambassador Jeter, accompanied by POLCOUNS, RNLEO and DEA Attache, called on NDLEA Chairman Bello Lafiaji at NDLEA Headquarters in Lagos October 4. Also participating from the NDLEA were: Special Assistant Usman Almali; Coordinator for International Affairs Vicent Ossai; Director for Money Laundering Tony Ray; Director for Legal Affairs Femi Oloruntoba; and Director for Investigations Aminu Shehu.

4.(C) Lafiaji expressed condolences over September 11. He he had just returned from an INTERPOL conference in Hungary where delegates spent two days discussing ways the international law enforcement community can better respond to the threat of global terrorism.

#### Money Laundering -----

5.(C) The Ambassador raised USG concerns over Nigeria's porous money laundering controls, concerns highlighted by Washington's effort to freeze the assets of suspected terrorists around the world. The FATF had "decertified" Nigeria in June, not only for the GON's failure to answer a questionnaire on Nigeria's money laundering control regime, but for serious deficiencies identified by the FATF review committee in Nigeria's anti-money laundering performance. (Comment: Post learned October 16 that the GON responded to the FATF belatedly, through an August 31 letter from the President's office. End Comment).

6.(C) Lafiaji acknowledged the FATF's assessment of Nigeria's shortcomings in this area. He pointed to the existing anti-drug money laundering law, a 1995 decree, and agreed its scope should be expanded to include the many other avenues of money laundering in Nigeria (e.g. corruption, trafficking in persons, fraud, and arms trafficking). To address this deficiency, the NDLEA has drafted revisions to the law, he claimed. Lafiaji asserted the NDLEA should be the lead agency in coordinating anti-money laundering activities. Lafiaji did not agree with our suggestion as a centralized agency specifically mandated to coordinate and command this effort.

#### NDLEA Operations at Air and Sea Ports -----

7.(C) Applauding the NDLEA for its record seizure of cocaine (60 kilograms) from a Brazilian freighter at the Lagos sea port August 27, the Ambassador asked if the NDLEA had obtained unrestricted port access. Lafiaji confirmed that, shortly after the large cocaine seizure, President Obasanjo issued an executive order granting the NDLEA unrestricted access to the Lagos ports.

Lafiaji has already chaired an interagency meeting with the Nigerian Port Authority, Customs, Immigration and the State Security Service (SSS) to work out the modalities for the NDLEA's full operational role at the sea ports.

#### Airports at Abuja, Kano Vulnerable?

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8.(C) The Chairman stated that traffickers appear to targeting airports where drug enforcement efforts are less vigorous. The thrice-weekly British Airways flight to London from Abuja and the thrice-weekly KLM flight to Amsterdam from Kano appear to have become more attractive to traffickers due to the heightened NDLEA scrutiny in Lagos. Neither airport has body x-ray or Itemiser equipment to screen passengers and baggage for drugs. The first drug seizure in over a year at the Kano airport was made on September 26 - 450 grams of cocaine injected by a passenger arriving on KLM from Curacao (via Amsterdam). This serves as a warning to the NDLEA, stated the Chairman, expressing his desire to place one of the two new INL-funded Itemisers with the NDLEA unit stationed at the Kano Airport.

9.(C) The NDLEA has only a "skeletal staff" in Abuja and no drug seizures have been made at the capital's airport, which is cause for concern, implied Lafiaji. He plans to bolster staffing and would like to install the second new Itemiser there.

#### DEA Operational Concerns

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10.(C) Ambassador Jeter cited his concern that the NDLEA is not sharing enough information on its operations with the DEA Lagos office. As an example, the DEA Attache produced a recent letter from the NDLEA reporting on significant drug enforcement activity but neglecting some crucial details. The DEA Attache also noted that he had not received monthly reports of drug seizures and arrests since June. Defensive at first, Chairman Lafiaji instructed his staff to improve its information-sharing with DEA.

#### October 10: Lafiaji's Tenure at One Year

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11.(C) Lafiaji sought a meeting with the Ambassador in Abuja October 10; RNLEO sat in. Noting that he had completed a full year as NDLEA Chairman that very day, Lafiaji highlighted several additional drug seizures over last week. He also sought our support for his idea that NDLEA should coordinate GON anti-money laundering efforts. The news he reported included the first drug seizure made in Lagos in connection with the South African Airways/Nigerian Airways flight to New York -- almost one kilogram of cocaine concealed in the clothing of a female Nigerian passenger attempting to board the October 5 flight.

12.(C) The NDLEA chief also reported another cocaine seizure made at the Kano airport on October 8 -- 710 grams carried internally by a male passenger also arriving from Curacao on KLM via Amsterdam. The Ambassador congratulated Lafiaji on the interdictions but reiterated USG concerns over the lack of evenly applied and well coordinated anti-money laundering efforts in Nigeria. A central body with the authority (e.g. the Presidency) to command disparate GON security agencies is essential to improve this situation, Jeter noted. RNLEO outlined the U.S. system which has a central coordinating body and information clearhouse (FINCEN) while the various agencies (e.g. DEA, FBI, USSS) run their own money laundering and financial crimes investigation units. Discussion of this topic concluded with Lafiaji agreeing that the NDLEA need lose its current focus on drug money laundering with the creation of a national centralized authority.

#### Comment

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13.(C) When first confronted with our serious money laundering concerns following the tragic September 11 bombings, Lafiaji seemed determined in our October 5 meeting to expand the NDLEA's jurisdiction, however impractical, by placing it in the lead of all GON efforts to fight money laundering. By October 18, however, his positions seems to have evolved to

an acceptance that a new federal entity - a la Financial Crimes Commission - is needed to coordinate the GON's anti-money laundering efforts.

14.(C) The NDLEA seems to have improved its interdiction efforts considerably, as shown by the increase level of heroin and cocaine seized over last year. All seizures made to date seem authentic and we have been able to keep closer watch on the statistical reporting. This is particularly noteworthy since we suspect, but have no proff, that the NDLEA may have "padded" its CY2000 seizure statistics during the last two months of the year. With new sea port access and greater federal resources employed, we expect to see additional successes on the drug enforcement front in the coming months.

Jeter